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LOS ANGELES

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CHARADES.


BY

WINTHROP MACKWORTH PRAED.



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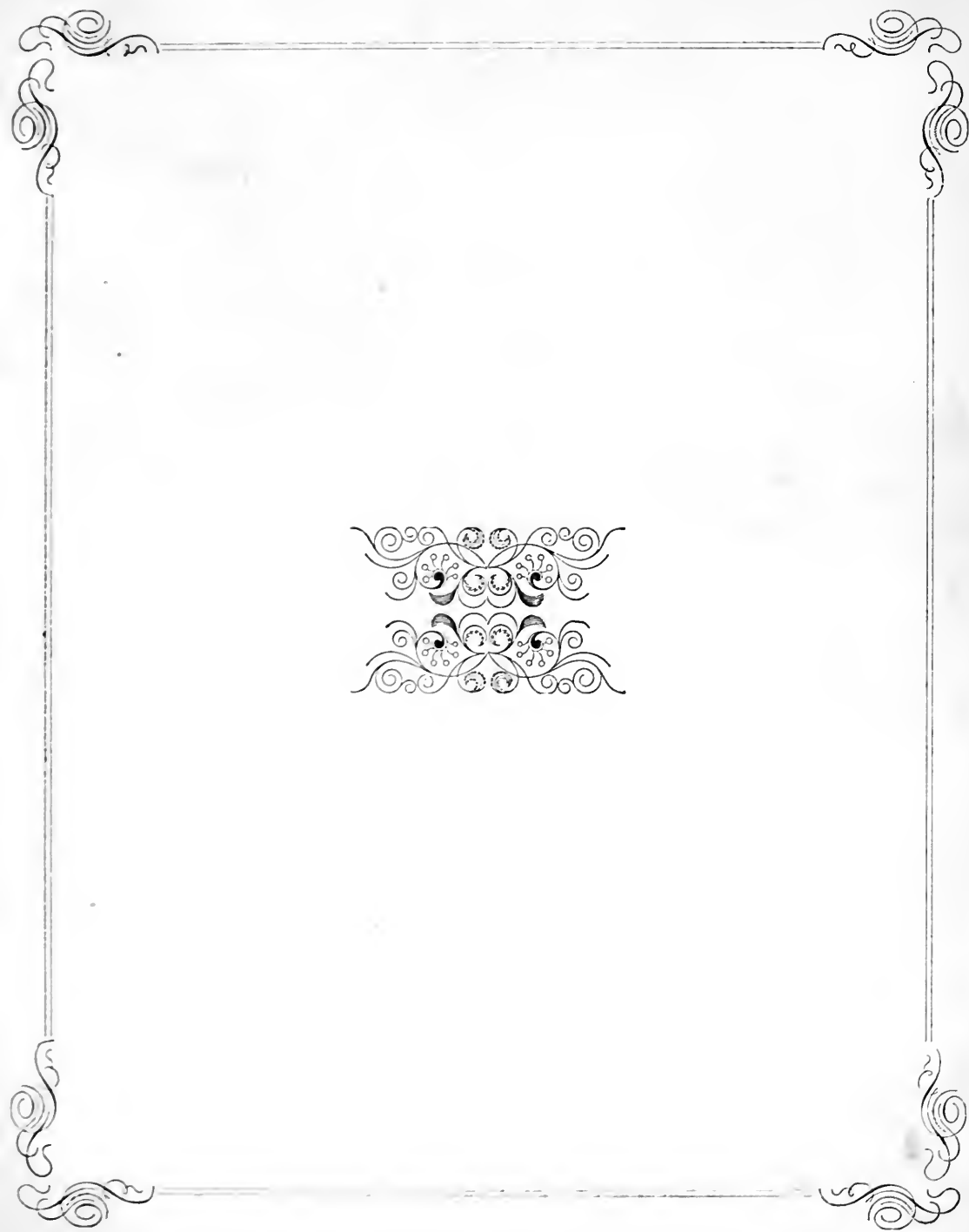
*Mrs. J. S. Hyman
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Charades.



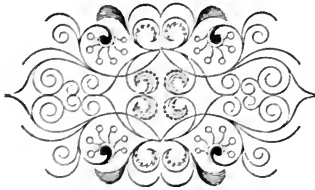
I.

MORNING is beaming o'er brake and bower,
Hark! to the chimes from yonder tower:
Call ye my **FIRST** from her chamber now,
With her snowy veil and her jewelled brow.

Lo! where my **SECOND**, in gorgeous array,
Leads from his stable her beautiful bay,
Looking for her, as he curvets by,
With an arching neck, and a glancing eye.

Spread is the banquet, and studied the song,
Ranged in meet order the menial throng;
Jerome is ready with book and stole,
And the maidens fling flowers, but where is my **WHOLE**?

Look to the hill—is he climbing its side?
Look to the stream—is he crossing its tide?
Out on the false one! he comes not yet—
Lady, forget him, yea, scorn and forget.



II.

THERE *was* a time young Roland thought
 His huntsman's call was worth a dozen
 Of those sweet notes his ear had caught
 In boyhood from his blue-eyed cousin.
 How is it *now*, that by my FIRST
 Silent he sits, nor cares to follow
 His deep-mouth'd stag-hound's matin burst,
 His clear-toned huntsman's joyous hollo?

How is it now, when Isabel
 Breathes one low note of those sweet numbers,
 That every thought of hill and dell,
 And *all*—save that sweet minstrel—slumbers?
 Why does he feel that long, dull pain
 Within my SECOND when she leaves him?
 When shall his falcon fly again?
 When shall he break the spell that grieves him?

And Isabel—how is it, too,
That sadness o'er that young brow closes?
How hath her eye lost half its blue?
How have her cheeks lost all their roses?
Still on her lute sweet numbers dwell,
Still magic seems the breath that sways it;
But, oh! how changed the tone and spell,
If Roland be not there to praise it!

One summer's eve, while Isabel
Sang till the starlight came to greet her,
A tear from Roland's eyelid fell,
And warp'd the string and spoil'd the metre.
She could not sing another note—
Wherefore, or why, I've not a notion;
And *he*—the swelling in *his* throat
Seemed working from some poisonous potion.

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I know not—I—how sigh or tear
Cause these hysterical effusions;
But from that eve, one little year
Witnessed, you'll say, such strange conclusion.
Beside my ALL I saw them sit;
And that same lute of song so tender—
A little child was thumping it
With all his might—against the fender!

And Isabel—she sang no more,
But ever that small urchin followed;
Who, with the lute upon the floor,
Like a young dryad, whooped and holloed!
And Roland's hound is heard again,
And Roland's hawk hath loosen'd jesses!
And Roland's smile is brightest when
Beside my ALL his boy he presses.

III.

SIR HARRY is famed for his amiable way
Of talking a deal, when he's nothing to say :
Sir Harry will sit by our Rosalie's side,
And whisper from morn until eventide ;
Yet, if you would ask of that maiden fair
What Sir Harry said while he linger'd there,
Were the maiden as clever as L. E. L.
Not a word that he said could the maiden tell !

Sir Harry has ears, and Sir Harry has eyes,
And Sir Harry has teeth of the usual size ;
His nose is a nose of the every-day sort—
Not exceedingly long, nor excessively short ;
And his breath, tho' resembling in nought the "sweet south,"
Is inhaled through his lips, and exhaled from his mouth ;
And yet, from the hour that Sir Harry was nursed,
People said that his *head* was no more than my FIRST !

Sir Harry has ringlets he curls every day,
 And a fortune he spends in pomatums, they say:
 He is just such a youth as our Rosalie bides with,
 When she has n't got *me* to take waltzes or rides with;
 But not such a one as, I ween, she would choose,
 Were a youth that *I* know to be caught in the noose;
 For I've oft heard her say—tho' so flighty she's reckon'd—
 That she'd ne'er take a bridegroom who had n't my **SECOND**!

Sir Harry sat out, the last visit he paid,
 From when breakfast was over, till dinner was laid!
 He talk'd, in his usual lady-like way,
 Of the ball and the ballet—the park and the play.
 Little Rosa, who hoped, ere the *whole* day had passed,
 That the youth would speak out, to the purpose, at last,
 When evening at length was beginning to fall,
 Declared that Sir Harry was nought but my **ALL**!

IV.

“MY FIRST was dark o’er earth and air,
As dark as she could be!
The stars that gemmed her ebon hair
Were only two or three:
King Cole saw twice as many there
As you or I could see.

“‘Away, King Cole,’ mine hostess said,
‘Flagon and flask are dry;
Your nag is neighing in the shed,
For he knows a storm is nigh.’
She set my SECOND on his head,
And she set it all awry.”

V.

COME from my FIRST, ay, come!
 The battle dawn is nigh;
 And the screaming trump and the thund'ring drum
 Are calling thee to die!
 Fight as thy father fought,
 Fall as thy father fell;
 Thy task is taught, thy shroud is wrought,
 So—forward! and farewell!

Toll ye, my SECOND! toll!
 Fling high the flambeau's light;
 And sing the hymn for a parted soul,
 Beneath the silent night!
 The wreath upon his head,
 The cross upon his breast,
 Let the prayer be said, and the tear be shed:
 So—take him to his rest!

Call ye my WHOLE, ay, call!
The lord of lute and lay;
And let him greet the sable pall
With a noble song to-day;
Go, call him by his name;
No fitter hand may crave
To light the flame of a soldier's fame
On the turf of a soldier's grave.



VI.

On the casement frame the wind beat high,
 Never a star was in the sky;
 All Kenneth Hold was wrapt in gloom,
 And Sir Everard slept in the haunted room.

I sat and sang beside his bed;—
 Never a single word I said,
 Yet did I scare his slumber;
 And a fitful light in his eye-ball glisten'd,
 And his cheek grew pale as he lay and listen'd,
 For he thought or he dream'd that fiends and fays
 Were reckoning o'er his fleeting days,
 And telling out their number.
 Was it my SECOND'S ceaseless tone?
 On my SECOND'S hand he laid his own:
 The hand that trembled in his grasp,
 Was crush'd by his convulsive clasp.

Sir Everard did not fear my FIRST ;
He had seen it in shapes that men deem worst
 In many a field and flood ;
Yet, in the darkness of his dread,
His tongue was parch'd, and his reason fled ;
And he watch'd, as the lamp burn'd low and dim,
To see some Phantom gaunt and grim
 Come, dabbled o'er with blood.

Sir Everard kneel'd, and strove to pray,
He pray'd for light, and he pray'd for day,
 Till terror check'd his prayer ;
And ever I muttered clear and well
"Click, click," like a tolling bell,
Till, bound in Fancy's magic spell,
 Sir Everard fainted there.

VII.

MY FIRST, in torrents bleak and black,
 Was rushing from the sky,
 When, with my SECOND at his back,
 Young Cupid wander'd by:
 "Now take me in; the moon hath past;
 I pray ye take me in!
 The lightnings flash, the hail falls fast,
 All Hades rides the thunder-blast;
 I'm dripping to the skin!"

"I know thee well, thy songs and sighs;
 A wicked god thou art,
 And yet most welcome to the eyes,
 Most witching to the heart!"
 The wanderer pray'd another prayer,
 And shook his drooping wing;

The lover bade him enter there,
And wrung my **FIRST** from out his hair,
And dried my **SECOND'S** string.

And therefore (so the urchin swore,
By Styx, the fearful river,
And by the shafts his quiver bore,
And by his shining quiver)
That Lover, aye, shall see my **WHOLE**
In life's tempestuous heaven;
And when the lightnings cease to roll,
Shall fix me on his dreaming soul
In the deep calm of even!



VIII.

ALAS! for that forgotten day
 When Chivalry was nourish'd,
 When none but friars learn'd to pray,
 And beef and beauty flourish'd!
 And fraud in kings was held accurst,
 And falsehood sin was reckon'd,
 And mighty chargers bore my FIRST,
 And fat monks wore my SECOND!

Oh, then I carried sword and shield,
 And casque with flaunting feather,
 And earned my spurs in battle field,
 In winter and rough weather;
 And polished many a sonnet up
 To ladies' eyes and tresses,
 And learned to drain my father's cup,
 And loose my falcon's jesses;

But dim is now my grandeur's gleam ;
The mongrel mob grows prouder,
And every thing is done by steam,
And men are kill'd by powder ;
And now I feel my swift decay,
And give unheeded orders,
And rot in paltry state away,
With sheriffs and recorders.



IX.

SIR HILARY charged at Agincourt,—

Sooth 'twas an awful day!

And though in that old age of sport

The rufflers of the camp and court

Had little time to pray,

'Tis said Sir Hilary mutter'd there

Two syllables by way of prayer.

My FIRST to all the brave and proud

Who see to-morrow's sun;

My NEXT with her cold and quiet cloud

To those who find their dewy shroud

Before to-day's be done;

And both together to all blue eyes

That weep when a warrior nobly dies.

X.

He talk'd of daggers and of darts,
Of passions and of pains,
Of weeping eyes and wounded hearts,
Of kisses and of chains;
He said, though love was kin to grief,
He was not born to grieve!
He said, though many rued belief,
She safely might believe;
But still the lady shook her head,
And swore, by yea and nay,
My **WHOLE** was all that he had said,
And all that he could say.

He said, my **FIRST**—whose silent car
Was slowly wandering by,
Veiled in a vapor faint and far
Through the unfathomed sky—

Was like the smile whose rosy light
 Across her young lips pass'd,
 Yet oh! it was not half so bright,
 It changed not half so fast;
 But still the lady shook her head,
 And swore, by yea and nay,
 My **WHOLE** was all that he had said,
 And all that he could say.

And then he set a cypress wreath
 Upon his raven hair,
 And drew his rapier from its sheath,
 Which made the lady stare;
 And said, his life-blood's purple flow
 My **SECOND** there should dim,
 If she he loved and worshipped so
 Would only weep for him;

But still the lady shook her head,
And swore by yea and nay,
My whole was all that he had said,
And all that he could say.



XI.

WHEN Ralph by holy hands was tied
 For life to blooming Cis,
 Sir Thrifty too drove home his bride,
 A fashionable Miss.
 That day, my FIRST, with jovial sound,
 Proclaim'd the happy tale,
 And drunk were all the country round
 With pleasure—or with ale.

Oh, why should Hymen ever blight
 The roses Cupid wore?
 Or why should it be ever night
 Where it was day before?
 Or why should women have a tongue,
 Or why should it be cursed
 In being, like my SECOND, long,
 And louder than my FIRST?

“You rascal!” cries the rural wench,
My lady screams, “Ah, bête!”
And Lady Thrifty scolds in French,
And Cis in Billingsgate;
Till both their Lords my **SECOND** try,
To end connubial strife,
Sir Thrifty hath the means to die,
And Ralph—to beat his wife!



XII.

I GRACED Don Pedro's revelry,
 All dressed in fire and feather,
 When loveliness and chivalry
 Were met to feast together;
 He flung the slave who moved the lid
 A purse of maravedis;—
 And this that gallant Spaniard did
 For *me* and for the Ladies.

He vow'd a vow, that noble knight,
 Before he went to table,
 To make his only sport the fight,
 His only couch the stable,
 Till he had dragged, as he was bid,
 Five score of Turks to Cadiz;—
 And this that gallant Spaniard did
 For *me* and for the Ladies.

To ride through mountains where my **FIRST**
A banquet would be reckon'd,—
Through deserts where to quench their thirst
Men vainly turn my **SECOND** ;
To leave the gates of fair Madrid,
To dare the gates of Hades ;—
And this that gallant Spaniard did,
For *me* and for the Ladies.



XIII.

THE Indian lover burst

From his lone cot by night;—
When love hath lit my FIRST,
In hearts by Passion nurst,
Oh! who shall quench the light?

The Indian left the shore;

He heard the night wind sing,
And cursed the tardy oar,
And wish'd that he could soar
Upon my SECOND'S wing.

The blast came cold and damp,

But, all the voyage through,
I lent my lingering lamp,
As o'er the marshy swamp
He paddled his canoe.

XIV.

THE canvas rattled on the mast,
As rose the swelling sail;
And gallantly the vessel pass'd
Before the cheering gale;
And on my FIRST Sir Florice stood,
As the far shore faded now,
And look'd upon the lengthening flood
With a pale and pensive brow:—
“When I shall bear thy silken glove
Where the proudest Moslem flee,
My lady love, my lady love,
Oh, waste one thought on me!”

Sir Florice lay in a dungeon cell,
With none to soothe or save;
And high above his chamber fell
The echo of the wave;

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But still he struck my **SECOND** there,
And bade its tones renew
Those hours when every hue was fair,
And every hope was true:—
“If still your angel footsteps move,
Where mine may never be,
My lady love, my lady love,
Oh, dream one dream of me!”

Not long the Christian captive pined!—
My **WHOLE** was round his neck;
A sadder necklace ne’er was twined,
So white a skin to deck;
Queen Folly ne’er was yet content
With gems or golden store,
But he who wears this ornament
Will rarely sigh for more:—

“My spirit to the Heaven above,
My body to the sea,
My heart to thee, my lady love :
Oh, weep one tear for me !”



XV.

A **TEMPLAR** kneel'd at a friar's knee :
He was a comely youth to see,
With curling locks, and forehead high,
And flushing cheek, and flashing eye ;
And the monk was as jolly and large a man
As ever laid lip to a convent can,
Or call'd for a contribution ;

As ever read, at midnight hour,
 Confessional in lady's bower,
 Ordain'd for a peasant the penance whip,
 Or spoke for a noble's venial slip
 A venal absolution.

"Oh, Father! in the dim twilight
 I have sinned a grievous sin to-night;
 And I feel hot pain e'en now begun
 For the fearful murder I have done.

"I rent my victim's coat of green;
 I pierced his neck with my dagger keen;
 The red streams mantled high;
 I grasp'd him, Father, all the while,
 With shaking hand and feverish smile,
 And said my jest, and sang my song,
 And laugh'd my laughter, loud and long,
 Until his glass was dry!

“Though he was rich, and very old,
I did not touch a grain of gold;
But the blood I drank from the bubbling vein
Hath left on my lip a purple stain.”

“My son! my son! for this thou hast done,
Though the sands of thy life for aye should run,”
The merry monk did say;
“Though thine eye be bright, and thine heart be light,
Hot spirits shall haunt thee all the night,
Blue devils all the day.”

The thunders of the church are ended,
Back on his way the Templar wended;
But the name of him the Templar slew
Was more than the Inquisition knew.



XVI.

UNCOUTH was I of face and form,
But strong to blast and blight,
By pestilence or thunderstorm,
By famine or by fight;
Not a warrior went to the battle plain,
Not a pilot steer'd the ship,
That did not look in doubt and pain,
For an omen of havoc or hurricane,
To my dripping brow and lip.

Within my SECOND'S dark recess,
In silent pomp I dwelt;
Before the mouth in lowliness
My rude adorers knelt;
And ever the shriek rang loud within,
And ever the red blood ran;

And amid the sin and smoke and din,
I sat with a changeless, endless grin,
Forging my FIRST for man.

My priests are rotting in their grave,
My shrine is silent now,
There is no victim in my cave,
No crown upon my brow;
Nothing is left but dust and clay
Of all that was divine;
My name and my memory pass away,
And yet this bright and glorious day
Is called by mortals mine!



XVII.

LORD RONALD, by the rich torchlight,
 Feasted his vassals tall,
 And he broach'd my FIRST, that jovial knight,
 Within his banner'd hall:
 The red stream went from wood to can,
 And then from can to mouth,
 And the deuce a man knew how it ran,
 Nor heeded, north or south.
 "Let the health go wide," Lord Ronald cried,
 As he saw the river flow,—
 "One health to-night to the noblest Bride,
 And one to the stoutest Foe!"

Lord Ronald kneel'd, when the morning came,
 Low in his mistress' bower,
 And she gave him my SECOND, that beauteous dame,
 For a spell in danger's hour:

Her silver shears were not at hand;
And she smiled a playful smile,
As she cleft it with her lover's brand,
And grew not pale the while:
"And ride, and ride," Lord Ronald cried,
As he kiss'd its silken glow;
"For he that woos the noblest Bride
Must beard the stoutest Foe."

Lord Ronald stood, when the day shone fair,
In his garb of glittering mail;
And mark'd how my WHOLE was crumbling there
With the battle's iron hail:
The bastion and the battlement
On many a craven crown,
Like rocks from some huge mountain rent,
Were tumbling darkly down:

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“Whate’er betide,” Lord Ronald cried,
As he bade his trumpets blow,
“I shall win to-night the noblest Bride,
Or fall by the stoutest Foe!”



XVIII.

Row on, row on!—The FIRST may light
My shallop o'er the wave to-night;
But she will hide, in a little while,
The lustre of her silent smile;
For fickle she is, and changeful still,
As a madman's wish, or a woman's will.

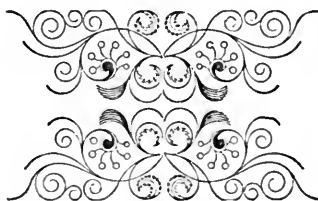
Row on, row on!—The SECOND is high
In my own bright lady's balcony;
And she beside it, pale and mute,
Untold her beads, untouch'd her lute,
Is wondering why her lover's skiff
So slowly glides to the lonely cliff.

Row on, row on!--When the WHOLE is fled,
The song will be hushed, and the rapture dead;

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And I must go in my grief again
To the toils of day, and the haunts of men,
To a future of fear, and a present of care,
And memory's dream of the things that were.



XIX.

ONE day my FIRST young Cupid made
In Vulcan's Lemnian cell,
For alas ! he had learn'd his father's trade,
As many have found too well ;
He work'd not the work with golden twine,
He wreath'd it not with flowers,
He left the metal to rust in the mine,
The roses to fade in the bowers :
He forged my FIRST of looks and sighs,
Of painful doubts and fears,
Of passionate hopes and memories,
Of eloquent smiles and tears.

My SECOND was a wayward thing,
Like others of his name,
With a fancy as light as the gossamer's wing,
And a spirit as hot as flame,

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And apt to trifle time away,
And rather fool than knave,
And either very gravely gay,
Or very gaily grave;
And far too weak, and far too wild,
And far too free of thought,
To rend what Venus' laughing child
Or Vulcan's anvil wrought.

And alas! as he led, that festal night,
His mistress down the stair,
And felt, by the flambeau's flickering light,
That she was very fair,
He did not guess—as they paused to hear
How music's dying tone
Came mournfully to the distant ear,
With a magic all its own—

That the archer god, to thrall his soul,
Was lingering in the porch,
Disguised that evening, like my whole,
With a sooty face and torch.



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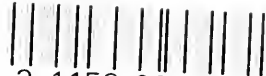
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